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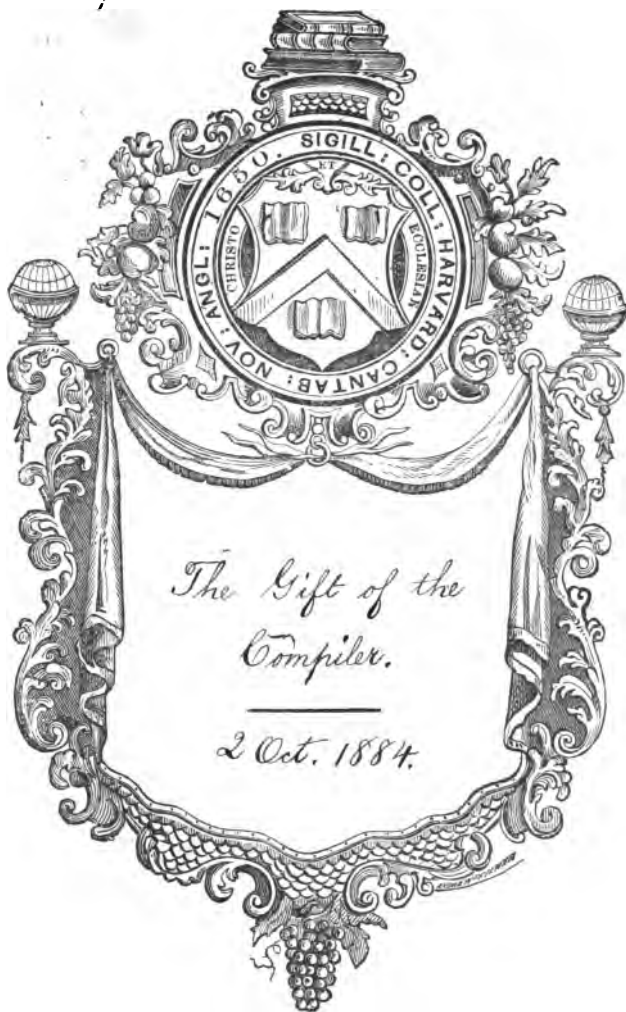
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HISTORICAL SKETCH

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HARVARD
COLLEGE

OF THE

Narragansett Baptist Association,

RHODE ISLAND, 1860-1884.

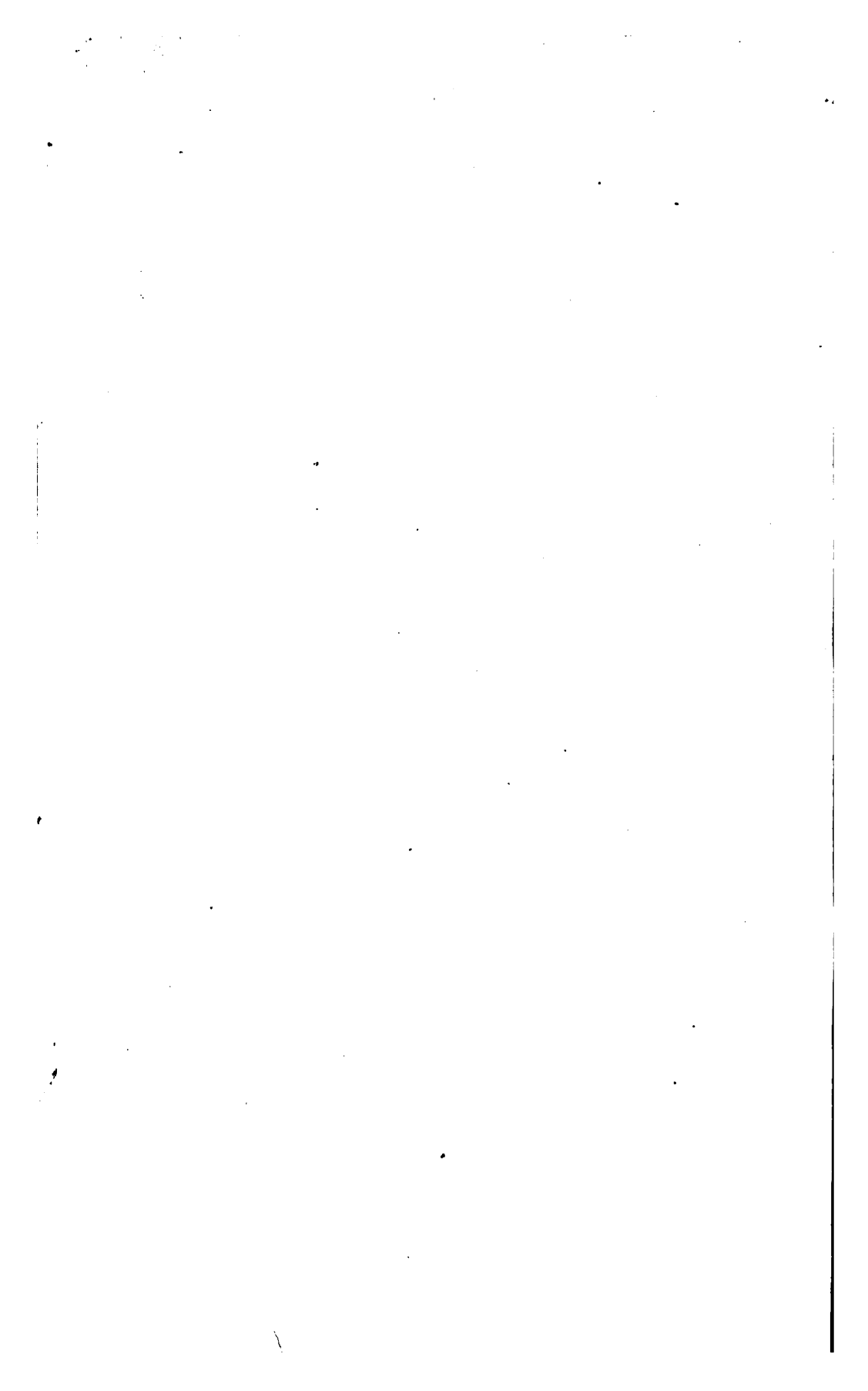
PREPARED BY

GEORGE B. PECK, A. M., M. D.,

Clerk of the Association.

PROVIDENCE:

PROVIDENCE PRESS COMPANY, BOOK PRINTERS.
1884.





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1884. Oct. 2,
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HISTORICAL SKETCH
OF THE
NARRAGANSETT BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,
RHODE ISLAND, 1860-1884.

PREPARED BY
GEORGE B. PECK, A. M., M. D.,
Clerk of the Association.

THEME.

To review the past is both a privilege and a duty. The pleasures of memory are no less substantial and abiding than the pleasures of hope, while the lessons of experience are more definite if not more intelligible than those of revelation. Furthermore, since the day in which the Supreme separated to Himself a chosen people, He has ever *commanded* them to remember all the way in which the Lord their God led them, to the end that they should not forget, it is He that giveth power and wealth, and not the cunning or the might of their hands. Meet, it is, therefore, upon our twenty-fifth birthday, to pause for a brief season, and cast a calm retrospective glance upon scenes that were, but are not, and strive to learn, not causes of gratulation and self-laudation, but practical lessons that may serve us in future years.

ORGANIZATION.

The Narragansett Baptist Association, the sixth and youngest daughter of the venerable Warren Association, was organized at the meeting-house of the Second Hopkinton Baptist Church in Wyoming Village, R. I., on Monday, October 2, 1860, twenty churches bringing with them the maternal benediction. These were the First and Central, Newport; First, Westerly; Niantic; First, New Shoreham; Warwick and East Greenwich; First, North Kingstown; Quiddnesset; First, Wickford; First and Second, South Kingstown; Queen's River; Narragansett; First, Charlestown; West Greenwich; Quidnic; Exeter; Second, Richmond; and First and Second, Hopkinton. They numbered 3,549 members. Fifteen of these churches (that is, all the above named, save the New Shoreham, Quiddnesset, Wickford, First Charlestown and West Greenwich) had assembled in convention while yet members of the Warren Association, on June 19, 1860, at the meeting-house of the Second Richmond Church, Shannock Mills, R. I., in response to circulars addressed to all churches south of the latitude of East Greenwich, inviting them to meet

by delegates, and deliberate upon the expediency of forming an Association of Baptist Churches in the south part of the State. They unanimously agreed upon the desirability of the proposed action, and arranged such preliminaries as seemed necessary to its fulfillment. The considerations prompting this step may be briefly stated to be the unwieldy proportions of the parental body; the possibility of forming therefrom two organizations of sufficient strength to exhibit the greatest possible efficiency; the development of dormant talent, property and piety; the incitement of greater sympathy between the churches and among the ministry, and finally the augmentation of the moral power of the denomination within the State. Suffice it here to say, that the event has fully proved the wisdom of the decision.

ANTECEDENTS.

It may interest some to know that for nearly a score of years the desirability of a South County Association had been discussed, and that several attempts had been made to form such a body, notably by the Exeter Church in 1844-5, but all proved futile. The careful skill of Rev. Dr. Henry Jackson, strengthened by the profound wisdom and commanding influence of Rev. Dr. Francis Wayland, was essential to the accomplishment of the undertaking. Most properly were they regarded as the fathers of this convocation: their entrance into rest was the fitting occasion of special memorial service.

FOUNDERS.

Shall we linger for a brief survey of the first gathering? Of pastors there were present Samuel Adlam, inflexible in principle, determined in counsel, and persistent in action; Henry Jackson, the model pastor, beloved alike by childhood and old age, ever abounding in good words and works, translated that he should not know death; J. H. Baker, the venerated spiritual father of many a household throughout the entire domain of this Association, and through the eastern borders of Connecticut as well, persevering in restless activity until he fell helpless in the harness in the very house of prayer; Edward Bell, whose genial smile and cordial greeting was a perpetual benison; John Tillinghast, whose sturdy independence of man, and whole-souled dependence on God, rendered him a tower of strength on the frontier; J. W. Allen, who also has received the welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant;" A. G. Palmer, the poet-orator, whose eloquent tongue and graceful pen even now honor the church, and bless the world; N. K. Bennett, George K. Clarke, C. Bray, E. J. Locke and J. L. Wightman, alike faithful to duty, regarding not the applause of man; S. B. Bailey, who fell asleep on Thursday last; and Edwin Stillman, of whom nothing can be learned. Chester Tilden, of the First, North Kingstown, since deceased, participated in the exercises of the preliminary convention, but was absent on this occasion, being on the eve of transferring his pastoral relations. Among the laymen were Deacon A. B. Chadsey, for five years Clerk of this body; D. M. C. Stedman, who recorded the transactions of the second session; Deacon J. R. Vincent, our first Treasurer, and Thomas H. Greene, for sixteen years his successor; Samuel I. Carr, who has since assumed the duties and responsibilities of an under-shepherd; Deacons S. S. Albro and Whipple King, Thomas T. Carr, Alvin Greene and Joseph Champlin, and Brothers James H. Perigo and James H. Wilson, who are present at this session also.

LIBERALITY.

A single incident of this first gathering demands special mention. A letter was presented from the Corresponding Secretary of the General Six Principle Baptist Association, expressing a desire that Christian fellowship may exist between the two Associations, and designating Elders Stedman Kenyon and Gilbert Tillinghast, and Deacon Jesse Potter, as its delegates. The record states that "the above named brethren were received and duly welcomed by the Moderator to the fellowship of the Association." It then goes on to say

that "Rev. Lebbeus M. Cottrell, of the Seventh Day Baptist denomination, was recognized by the Moderator, and admitted to the privileges of visiting brethren." Finally, delegations were appointed, of three ministers to the Six Principle Baptist Association, and of two each to the Freewill and Seventh Day Baptist Associations. The propriety of this last action, or perhaps better the legality, a point by no means affirmatively determined, may well be left to the consideration of those versed in civil and ecclesiastical polity. The entire occurrence, however, is deeply significant as an indication on the one hand of the depth and breadth to which the sentiment of the essential unity of the Christian Church has permeated the people (for differences among those most nearly related are always the most intense), and on the other, how far, even to the total disregard of technicalities and unessentials, this so-called *exclusive sect* will go to extend to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth the fraternal hand and a hearty God bless you. Christian liberality is indigenous only to those churches who base their membership solely on profession of faith in the God-man, Jesus of Nazareth, as a personal Saviour, and who recognize no intervening authority between the soul and its Maker. In organizations depending on these two principles as conditions of existence, opportunity for unholy emulation is impossible. Elsewhere the existence of liberal sentiments is necessarily sickly and precarious.

WAR.

Before a year had passed, Civil War burst forth in the land as suddenly and as unexpectedly to most as the tornado on a delightful summer afternoon. The thunders of Sumpter fell upon the ear like that from lightning in a clear sky; its fall was as the descent of an angel from on high calling with clarion tone, to arms! The churches heard the summons; they recognized the mandate of the Supreme, and promptly obeyed. Their younger sons, clad in the full panoply of war, and remembering what Inspiration saith, "the powers that be are ordained of God," and "therefore he that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance of God," what their fathers had suffered to secure the priceless heritage they enjoyed not only through the turmoils of war, but from imprisonment and bonds and stripes, and what their Master had endured that *whosoever* believeth may have eternal life, at once entered the field, enthusiastically singing, "As He died to make men holy let us die to make men free," and from Bull Run to Appomattox, each, according to his several ability, whether clad in a plain blouse or wearing a general's stars, acquitted themselves like men. Some were permitted to fulfill the complete sacrifice tendered by enlistment, and to pour forth their life's blood on the triple altar of Liberty, Country, and God. Of such the Wickford Church lost two at Newbern; the First, Newport, Corporal Thomas B. Tanner, at Antietam, when he had gallantly borne the stars and stripes to within twenty feet of the enemy's lines; and the First, South Kingstown, on the same hotly contested field, its recent Sunday School Superintendent, Brigadier-General Isaac P. Rodman, whose brief, but brilliant record, clearly revealed the possession of military talent of a high order. Most, however, returned. Though a thousand fell at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand, they were granted to behold the reward of the wicked, and having served well their day and generation, to enjoy the peace their valor won under their own vines and by their own firesides. They who remained at home strengthened the arms of their brethren by contributions of money and clothing and delicacies, as well as by words of sympathy and approval and prayer. They saw that the churches should purify themselves at the earliest opportunity of all suspicion of complicity with that evil which had evoked the wrath of the Most High, and exerted their influence in the State to the same great end. As early as 1842, the Quiddnesset Church had declared its belief that it is "wrong to hold any of our fellow beings in slavery, that it is contrary to our religious principles, and also contrary to the precepts of the gospel of Jesus Christ," and voted that "all persons holding a slave or slaves, and not treating them as subjects of their own family, and also who do not intend to emancipate them at the first proper and suitable opportunity, shall be excluded from the communion and fellowship of this church." With these sentiments the entire Association was in more or less hearty accord, for when judgment overtook us it was prompt to "acknowledge His

right as the God of the nations to punish us for our rebellion against His government, and" to "recognize in the terrible character of the punishment, His utter abhorrence of our great national sin, and His fixed purpose to purge us from it." It set apart the fourth Sabbath evening of each month as special seasons of prayer for the country, and appointed the third Thursday in October, 1862, as a day for fasting and humiliation. The First Hopkinton Church was not exceptional when it stated that "the gospel we sustain among us proclaims liberty to the captives, the opening of the prison to them that are bound, a complete submission to our Lord Jesus Christ, and no sympathy with rebels or traitors, North or South."

REPRESENTATION.

At our second session a committee was appointed to inquire into the expediency of limiting the number of delegates from the churches. It recommended "that while we hope the number of visitors to the Association shall be as large as possible, no church shall have, in addition to the pastor, more than six delegates to represent them." "After some discussion the report was adopted," and this most unwise regulation governed the organization of this body until 1876. Two years before, the Warren Association, which for many years had placed no restriction upon representation, and previously had received but two messengers with the pastor, at a session which may well be denominated the Gettysburg of the open communion movement in this State, suddenly awoke to the dangers of such a system, or rather lack of system, and immediately decreed that delegates shall hereafter be received only in proportion to the number of members in the appointing church. Warned by the parent's experience, our pastors carefully considered the subject, and in 1876, Rev. N. J. Wheeler moved the rescindment of the old resolution, and the adoption of the following: "Every church in this Association shall be entitled to representation in the meetings thereof by three messengers, in addition to its pastor; and all churches whose membership exceeds one hundred shall be entitled to three additional messengers for every one hundred members of such excess, and one for any fractional part over full hundreds; nevertheless, the names of all ordained ministers and licentiates shall be inserted in the Minutes." This rule which is essentially that adopted by the Warren Association (altered only to adapt it more perfectly to the requirements of our smaller churches), was accepted, and now stands first in our system of order. This arrangement, combining in one body most judiciously the representative systems of the national Senate and House, insures the protection of the numerically weak, properly conserves the influence of the strong, and guarantees against the use of the Association's name in any cause contrary to the views of a majority of the members of its constituency. God grant our next elder sister may not have occasion bitterly to regret, when too late, that she has neglected so long a simple act of justice!

DEVOTION.

In 1864, a resolution was adopted requesting pastors to report "at the next Anniversary, the number of male members connected with their respective churches, and also particularly the number of male members who are accustomed to participate in their devotional meetings." "The result of the investigation is thus stated: "The proportion of male members who are active in the devotional meetings of the churches, as represented in the letters, is about eighteen per cent. of the whole." If the language is to be interpreted as it stands, and not after the manner of modern advanced criticism, more than one-half the brethren perform their duty in this respect. Still the number of unreliable servants is altogether too large. The occasion of this is twofold: first, the extreme difficulty of turning mental power, after a day of toil, into a channel entirely diverse from that in which it is ordinarily exerted; second, a distrust of individual ability. The remedy is also twofold: first, regular stated preparation for the service, (which is incumbent alike upon them and upon the pastor), by the selection of a verse of Scripture or poetry, a bit of experience, or any valuable thought, howsoever obtained, and its careful consideration while on the street, or in moments of waiting, dur-

ing the two or three preceding days; second, a knowledge of the fact that but few brethren can be found in any of our churches who cannot, at least occasionally, speak to edification if they *will*, and that generally these are *not* the ones troubled with scruples concerning their qualifications.

SERMONS.

When this Association was organized, it was with the thought of making its gatherings seasons of marked spiritual refreshing. To this end the evening session was devoted exclusively to conference and prayer. The service was one peculiar to this Association. In 1869, however, the latter part of the evening was devoted to listening to a sermon; since 1874, this has been the unvarying custom. The desire of the fathers has been fulfilled in a more efficient way.

OFFICERS.

Previously to 1874, a plurality of votes was sufficient to elect a Moderator or Clerk in either of the three Associations of Rhode Island. That year, the Warren Association, prompted by considerations similar to those that influenced it to rearrange its system of representation, voted that "a majority of all the votes cast be necessary to a choice." At our next meeting we manifested an appreciation of her wisdom by adopting the same rule. For the benefit of the future historian, it may be remarked that the public nomination of candidates for Associational offices is unknown.

WOMEN.

The session of 1877 is notable in that it witnessed the first appearance of women as delegates to this body. A few pertinent facts demand record; comment will be referred to my successor in 1910. So far as could be discovered from a rather hasty examination of the Minute-files, no church in our Associations appointed any sister to represent it prior to 1872. That year the Second, Newport, Rev. C. H. Malcolm, pastor, the Warwick and Coventry (now the First, Crompton,) Rev. O. P. Fuller, pastor, each appointed two ladies as messengers, and the Natick, Rev. C. L. Frost, pastor, three ladies; all of course to the Warren Association. To them apparently belongs the honor of the innovation. The same number appeared the next year, though from a somewhat different constituency. In 1874, however, memorable as already indicated, eighteen were reported, and the custom was fairly established. Lady messengers are first mentioned by the Providence Association in 1876, and by the Narragansett Association in 1877. The first woman publicly to address this organization was Mrs. E. S. Burlingame, Corresponding Secretary of the Rhode Island Women's Christian Temperance Union, at the session of 1883. It was upon invitation of the presiding officer; the request for a hearing had not been presented to the Committee of Arrangements, nor was any member thereof at all cognizant of the matter until the Moderator introduced her.

ABSENTEEISM.

At the session of 1879, fourteen churches reported that nearly nineteen per cent. of their members are non-resident. In view of this fact the Association "while affirming the rule that such members should unite as soon as possible with some church near their residence," "urgently recommended the churches of this Association to expect and to solicit contributions from their non-resident as from their resident members," "for it is the duty of every member to contribute as the Lord has prospered, to the support of that particular church to which he belongs." A certain church in this State, some years ago, was accustomed to raise the few hundred dollars necessary to meet its expenses, (in addition to the Society's receipts, which defrayed almost the entire cost of public worship,) by a direct tax. This was based on the income of the mem-

bers, and whenever that was actually known, as in the case of school-teachers, for example, the rate was one-third of one per cent. In addition to this, of course the person paid rental for seat or pew, and contributed to the several benevolent objects presented. The admirable working of this system, but more especially its justice, and its propriety, long since convinced me that here is to be found a safe guide for the determination of a member's smallest pecuniary obligation to his church. (Those rare instances in which, through misfortune, the brother can barely maintain himself, are, of course, excepted.) It also accurately indicates the amount—*tax*, if you please—which every non-resident member of every church should annually pay into its treasury for the privilege of retaining his connection with that particular organization. If that love of home so often prated of possesses not so slight a value, it is high time that the tie should be sundered, and the absent one placed under the authoritative supervision of a neighboring church.

COMITY.

In former days it was quite the custom when a difficult or perplexing question arose within a church, or between two or more churches, to refer the matter to the Association for its opinion; not that any authority attended its judgment, but the greater assembled wisdom, and the freedom from local interest and prejudice, increased the probability of accuracy and justice, and hence the moral influence of the decision. But once in our history has such a thing occurred. In 1879 a church asked if "members excluded from one church in our fellowship can be rightfully received into another church which is also in our fellowship?" The Association replied, "that while the independence of the churches should, as ever, be fully recognized, the corporate headship of Christ in them should also be recognized, and that such an act as that complained of cannot be regarded otherwise than as a serious violation of the spirit of the Gospel, and of the fellowship of the churches, and must, if persisted in, soon destroy that mutual respect and fraternity which are absolutely essential to our denominational existence." It also added, "that if the offending church were a member of this Association, further action should be taken; but since the offending church is a member of another Association with which our own is in fellowship," the matter will be referred to that body.

Accordingly the Clerk addressed a communication to the Warren Association, of which the aggrieved church was a member, stating the complaint, and our action thereupon. This was courteously received, and after some deliberation the following judgment was pronounced: "When a person expelled from a Baptist Church asks to be received into another Baptist Church, whether in the same or any neighboring Association, the church to which he applies, if it is satisfied that the applicant is worthy of admission, and if it wishes to receive him, should first request the church that expelled him to reconsider the case, receive again the offending brother, and furnish him a letter of dismission to the church which he wishes to join. Or, failing to secure a reconsideration of the case, the church which asks for it, if it desires to proceed further, should invite its sister church to join it in calling a council upon the case, and if a council cannot be secured on invitation of both churches, should at least call an *ex parte* council before accepting the excluded person. If the decision of such council prove unsatisfactory, and the church to which the expelled person applied still proposes to receive him, great care should be taken to make no imputation of injustice against the church which expelled him. A difference in judgment, and a consequent contrariety of action in such a case, do not furnish occasion for severance of fellowship between churches holding the same faith and engaged upon the same all important work. United in all essentials, no incident of discipline should alienate the churches of our denomination."

Concerning the first three directions for action here enunciated, there can be no diversity of opinion. Occasionally attendant circumstances render it impossible (improper) for the excluding church to reopen an offender's case, but neither principle nor dignity is compromised by an agreement to refer adjudication to a mutual council. On the contrary, a refusal to participate in the call of such an assemblage is *prima facie* proof of wrong on the part of that church. The decision of an *ex parte* council the summoning church is

bound to accept by every consideration of honor, honesty, and Christian courtesy. Though conceivable that it may be erroneous, far better is it that one person should be left without the pale of the visible church, than that seeds of discord and strife be sown among the churches — than that any church should take to itself a reputation for obduracy and conceit. Perseverance in a course materially at variance with an *ex parte* decision, or the acceptance of an excluded member, except in the manner above indicated, while not necessarily an "occasion for severance of fellowship between churches holding the same faith and engaged upon the same all-important work," merits more or less censure, according to the heinousness of the offence, from the Association with which said church or churches is connected, at such time as the matter may be brought to its attention.

INTEMPERANCE AND SUNDAY DESECRATION.

The Association has occupied no uncertain position regarding intemperance. Twenty years ago it recommended to the churches, "the vigorous use of all the means in their power to abolish this pernicious evil, which is destroying the bodies and souls of the people; that by covenant or resolution they require all their members to pledge themselves to abstain from the use of all intoxicating drinks as a beverage; and the formation of Temperance Societies in all the Sabbath Schools of the Association, that we may save our children from the fangs of the destroyer." Equally pronounced is its attitude towards the desecration of the Lord's day. It has ever held that the "proper observance of this is essential to public and private welfare, to our temporal and eternal good," and that "excursions on railways and steamboats, ordinary pleasure riding, social gatherings and festivities, and the opening on this day of places of amusement, are clearly in violation of the Sabbath law of God, and are fitted to bring upon us as a people His judgment and His wrath."

BENEFICENCE.

The past twelve years have been characterized by a revival of the missionary spirit of the apostolic age within our several churches. This the Association has appropriately voiced from time to time in urgent recommendations to the pastors diligently to cultivate that spirit by the dissemination of missionary intelligence and missionary publications throughout their congregations, by the formation of local auxiliary societies, and by thorough organization for charitable work, which shall include every person attendant on their ministrations; to the churches to practice systematic individual benevolence, (exempting none) with a liberality that will net at least one dollar per member as a contribution to the American Baptist Missionary Union, and corresponding amounts to the American Baptist Home Mission Society, the American Baptist Publication Society, the Rhode Island Baptist State Convention, and the Rhode Island Baptist Education Society. True, this modest standard has not yet been attained, but the progress thitherward has been constant, and we trust ere long each brother and each sister will know the luxury of giving, will experience the bliss of *sacrificing somewhat* for Christ.

CIRCULAR LETTERS.—HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

When Associations were first organized in this country the isolated condition of the churches the difficulty and expense of communication whether by messengers or by mail and the entire absence of religious periodicals invested the Circular Letter with an importance and an authority of which but the shadow remains. Its chief office was instruction on important questions of the day; encouragement was but an incidental function. Hence a review of subjects presented, mirrors the thought and the condition of the churches at the time. A brief glance at those issued by this body is, therefore, appropriate.

The first very properly gave (after a brief sketch of the rise of the Warren

Association and the birth of its several daughters) the *exclusive* object of the new organization which "is to bring up the churches embraced therein to a higher plane of usefulness," to accomplish which it was declared "nothing is needed but the *simple nurture of the gospel*." "We acknowledge no other law of vitality and increase than this; we know no other." The next year we considered the "Hinderances to Conversion and Church Membership as found within the pale of the Visible Church." Then the "Moral Obligation of Members to Abide by the Decisions of the Churches to which they Belong," was presented with a clearness and vigor that could have originated only in the personal experience of the author. Naturally followed "Christian Obedience an Evidence of Grace and the Condition of its Increase." "We can know that we *feel* like Christians only when and so far as we *act* like Christians." The spirit of eclecticism in duty is rebuked, and the spirit of lawlessness whereby Christians are led to "neglect their covenant obligations as persistently as if they were unconscious that every step of their pathway through life they added the sin of perjury to the baseness of ingratitude." It is asked, "If church oaths cannot bind Christians, is it to be supposed that State oaths will bind men of the world? The one great lesson of the frightful tragedy now enacting before our eyes, (the great rebellion) is the danger of disobedience; the sanctity of oaths and law." "The ownership of Christ in His disciples, and the claims He has consequently upon each of them," was possibly suggested by the invalidity of the claim of one man to possess another then being demonstrated by the Almighty through the inexorable logic of events. The restoration of peace was signalized by "Brotherly Love, the Badge and Bond of true Disciples." "The importance of a more constant and systematic study of the Sacred Scriptures," was then urged as promoting "stability of Christian character, growth in the divine life and unity of religious convictions among Christians." Two years later, attention was directed to Christian knowledge, its nature, the obligations to acquire it and its uses. Then "one of the most important duties of our holy religion, a benevolent regard for the interests of our fellowmen," was insisted upon. Finally, in 1870, instruction was given in the matter of "Ordinance Keeping." "The New Testament Ordinances are but two: Baptism, and the Lord's Supper;" "to every baptized organized body of believers they are committed for keeping and perpetuation," and "they are to be kept as Christ and His commissioned delegates delivered them to us, because our Lord has expressly bidden us to do so," and because they are "Truth Bearers,—forms and modes of conduct charged with great evangelical ideas—symbolic acts, speaking as no words could speak to men—speaking the same truths and ideas to all nations, amid all the inevitable changes in the forms and meanings of words." A Circular Letter was prepared and read in 1872, but was displaced from the Minutes by the Historical Sketch of the Second South Kingstown Church. In 1876 a Letter was published aptly answering the question on every one's lips: "What shall we read?" in place of a Sketch, but long since it was determined to be the policy of the Association to gather up as promptly as possible into enduring form the early history of her churches, that no more fragments thereof be lost.

ORDINANCES.

The past quarter century is notable for having witnessed the slow rise and swift overthrow of the so called open communion movement. The smoke of its battle has already rolled away, revealing the late contestants in hearty fraternization. Far be it from me, therefore, to enkindle animosities by portraying the bitter, desperate strifes that occurred beneath that kindly sheltering cloud. True, occasionally may be found an implacable person who regards not the authority of his church officers, but with the doughty South Carolina colonel at Appomattox exclaims: "I never surrender!" A fifteen minutes' interview with some spiritual Custer will settle all that. In this State, the First and Central Newport Churches, and to a less degree the First Westerly Church bore the brunt of conflict. Their strength of purpose and devotion to duty were thoroughly tested, and in no respect were they found deficient. Early in the strife, that all needed encouragement might be supplied, the following declaration of principles was adopted:

WHEREAS, The Narragansett Association accepts the word of God as ultimate authority in religious faith and practice, and

WHEREAS, The reaffirmation of fundamental principles already acknowledged is beneficial to the cause of truth, therefore

Resolved, That this Association, recognizing baptism as the initiatory ordinance to the visible church, recognizes also therein its precedence to that memorable Supper which was ordained for the perpetual observance of the church, and considers the invitation of unbaptized persons to the Supper subversive of Gospel order, and tending to discourage the use of scriptural baptism.

ASSEMBLIES.—MINUTES.

Having presented, topically, all the important features of our history, there remains to be considered simply its statistical record. The first session opened, as has already been indicated, on the first Tuesday in October, 1860, the second on the fourth Tuesday in June, 1861, the third on the first Tuesday in October, 1862, the fourth on the second Tuesday in October, 1863, and the fifth to the tenth, inclusive, on the *first* Tuesday in October. At this last gathering it was voted that "hereafter the meetings of the Association be held on the first Wednesday and Thursday of September, provided the Commencement of Brown University be held at some other time;" subsequent sessions have been held accordingly. The Minutes of these several meetings were printed in separate pamphlets until 1871, when the Warren, Providence and Narragansett Associations combined with the State Convention and the Education Society in the publication of "Minutes of the Rhode Island Baptist Anniversaries." This has been continued until the present time and should be indefinitely. Beside saving very considerable sums to the two benevolent organizations, which are devoted to the promotion of their respective objects, it is absolutely a matter of economy to each Association. But far more important is the fact that each family connected with our churches now receives each year a detailed report of the condition of each church within our fellowship in the State; an account of the expenditure of moneys devoted to missionary purposes among us, and also the names of those aided by us in their preparation for the Christian ministry. An edition of three thousand copies is ordinarily struck off. This allows a distribution of ten copies to each church for every dollar contributed, and a surplus sufficient to meet the requirements of the several bodies at their annual sessions. The expense is apportioned exactly (or will be after this year) according to the amount of printed matter furnished by each Association and the number of copies taken, or, in other words, each Association will pay for printing its own transactions, and such part of the Convention's and Education Society's as it takes for its own use. An experience of thirteen years has shown that this system cannot be improved upon in any particular.

GROWTH.

As has been already mentioned, twenty churches participated in the organization of this Association. One of these, the Quidnick Church, was outside the territorial limit designated by the Warren Association in its resolution approving the contemplated action, and accordingly it was requested to ask a special letter of dismission from that body, which was kindly granted. On the other hand, one within the limits, the First East Greenwich, did not report here until the second session. At that time the First Exeter Church, upon application and after strict examination, was cordially welcomed to our fellowship. Thus, though but one church is reported as admitted in 1861, the total number of churches belonging was increased to twenty-two. In 1868 a request for admission from the Shiloh Church, Newport, was read, whereupon it was voted to request the church to send delegates with its Covenant and Articles of Faith to the next meeting. When the messengers appeared (1869) with the information that they had adopted the New Hampshire Articles and Covenant, the pastor, as representative of the church, received the right hand of fellowship from the Moderator. In 1877 the Central Jamestown Church, having given satisfactory evidence that it "is in hearty agreement with the doctrinal position of the Association, 'in full fellowship with the views held by the churches of this body,' both as to the way of salvation and the constitution of the church, and the nature and order of the ordi-

nances," was also received into membership. In 1881, the Quidnick Church, because of the difficulty of its geographical location and the inconvenience of attending our several places of meeting, with many assurances of fraternal feeling and Christian love, asked to be dismissed to join the Warren Association. The request was granted and the Clerk directed to communicate to the Quidnick Church the regret of the Association at parting with a constituent member, its abiding love for the departing sister, and its earnest desire for her future prosperity. This letter was subsequently enclosed by the church in its application to the Warren Association for readmission. The vacant place was filled by the accession of the Arcadia Church, leaving our numbers unchanged. Finally, at our present sitting, we have been permitted to welcome to our ranks the First Baptist Church at Narragansett Pier, making the number of our members and the number of our sessions identical.

STATISTICS.

During the past twenty-four years there have been baptized into our several churches, 2,718 persons. In the same period have been received by letter, 909; by experience, 328, and by restoration, 142. The losses have been, by dismission, 1,231; by exclusion, 646; by erasure, 843, and by death, 1,279. The present number of members is 3,794. These figures are worthy careful scrutiny.

DISMISSIONS.

Observe, first, that forty-five per cent. of our converts are dismissed to other folds. It is true that their places are partly made good by very considerable accessions by letter, still there remains a constant drainage of twelve per cent.,—whither? To city churches chiefly. The Providence Association, composed principally of such, reports a net gain from this source during the twenty-three years ending September 1, 1883, equal to eleven per cent. of that from baptism. Even in the Warren, where the proportion of rural churches is far greater, there is a corresponding gain of four per cent. Hence the supreme importance of maintaining in our ranks a rigid system of discipline and training. Our representatives thus thoroughly imbued with a stern, uncompromising devotion to principle and unhesitating loyalty to duty, undaunted by the taunts of liberalism and the darts of philosophy, whether serving as officers or privates in the Lord's army, shall strengthen and energize all those with whom their lot is cast. Themselves established in the faith, *never* will they permit a *single doctrine of Scripture, however obnoxious* to the natural heart, to be *denied or obscured* in their presence, but under the glorious banner, "ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM," *fight until death* for the *maintenance* and the *extension* of the *apostolic church, the primitive Christianity*.

EXCLUSIONS.

Observe, secondly, that about twenty-four per cent., or nearly one-quarter, of those baptized into our communion are subsequently excluded. The comparative ratio in the Warren Association for the past twenty-three years is twenty per cent., and in the Providence eleven per cent. This is a serious matter—discreditable in fact—and its causes demand immediate and careful consideration.

First, in the order of time as well as of importance, is the neglect of church committees to guard well the door of the fold. Practically with them rests the question of the candidate's admission; it is their province to recommend the applicant's petition or to suggest that he defer its presentation. The greater freedom in expression of the novitiate in a small room, before a limited number of persons, and of the church officers in questioning in what should be (at least so far as they are concerned) a strictly secret conclave, affords a far better opportunity for correct judgment than a crowded church meeting, to the testimonial part of which strangers are most properly admitted. The church vote, though essential, is really ceremonial; it is deter-

mined by the advice of its officials. Hence it is the exception to find in the so called experiences of at least the past decade and a half satisfactory evidence that the speaker has met with any change of heart or of principle. Notice that is not denied that in the vast majority of cases regeneration has been effected; the subsequent life *proves* it; it is simply affirmed that the church listens to no personal testimony indicating the fact. For this the committee is responsible.

A second cause of this fearful loss is improper church government. There seems to be but one penalty known to Baptist churches, and that is the withdrawal of fellowship. The evil of this is two fold; persons are permitted to remain in good standing who notoriously merit effective rebuke of some kind, and others are summarily expelled who, under juster treatment, would prove strong pillars in the House of the Lord. Paul says, "We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally, members one of another." Now it is unnecessary for me to say how difficult it is, under the most favorable conditions, to establish reunion with the most insignificant member after it has once been severed from the parent trunk, how impossible it is after a few hours separation, despite stitches, and plasters, and salves. So, too often by one inconsiderate step a valuable soldier is lost forever to the church militant, too often even the grasp of Omnipotence on that soul is frightfully strained! The remedy is simple: a general recognition of suspension from church privileges, as an important method of disciplining all but the most flagrant transgressors. A discussion of the principles governing the infliction of this punishment is here impossible.

A third cause is (alas! for the necessity of mentioning it!) church quarrels. The famous Dred Scott decision,—Black men have no rights a white man is bound to respect,—which has been stricken from our statute books with bayonets, and its pages bleached with white men's blood, is but a special manifestation of that general law, farther illustrated in the ordinary treatment of minorities by majorities, but first exemplified just beyond the outskirts of Eden by Cain upon Abel—weakness has no rights that might is bound to respect. This dogma, sanctioned by the ages, and thoroughly instilled into the very constitution of man, requires a high development of Christian character for its destruction. Religious wars have ever been the fiercest, for each side fought for God and His truth, but, "Sirs, ye are *brethren*; *why do ye wrong one to another?*" Have differences from any cause arisen in our churches? Have any members felt aggrieved at the decision and withdrawn from active service? Take heed, oh powerful ones, how you deal with such, lest the offence for which you judge them be strictly chargeable at your own door, and the condemnation visited on them righteously returned to you by the World, and by the Final Arbitrer of Destinies! Proof of the injustice of many of the exclusions is to be found in the fact that in this Association twenty-three per cent. of those thus treated have subsequently been restored; in the Warren, twenty-two per cent., and in the Providence, seventeen per cent. Corroborative circumstantial evidence is open to all in the respective files of Minutes.

ERASURE.

Observe, thirdly, that a number of names, nearly equal to thirty-one per cent. of the baptisms reported, have been erased from our various lists of members. This is chiefly the fault of the church clerk. If he will not, or cannot, keep an accurate record of the residences of those enrolled in his books and with whom he should communicate at least once a year, the office should be at once vacated and filled with a person who can and will keep a proper register. This is of special importance to our smaller churches which are so frequently pastorless.

Occasionally a member whose piety is unquestioned, for reasons satisfactory to his own conscience, desires to unite with a church of some other faith or order. In what way shall his present connections be dissolved? Obviously expulsion would be unjust; it is not an act that necessarily reflects upon his integrity. Equally clear is it that *we cannot recognize as a Christian church any organization that is not composed wholly of believers baptized into the name of the Triune God, nor of such organizations any who confessedly set at naught or encourage the disregard of any of the explicit commands of Christ, or of his authorized representatives, the Apostles.* Hence,

no letter of dismission can be granted. It remains, therefore, but to drop his name from the roll, granting a certificate of Christian character if desired. This was voiced in the declaration of the Association in 1881 that it "regards the use of the word 'erase,' in its table of statistics, as properly applying only to members of our churches whose residences are unknown, or against whose moral character there is no charge."

MORTALITY.

During the past twenty-four years 1,279 members have been rested from their labors, and their works have followed with them. Time forbids if place does not to eulogize any, yet the names of ministers who have left us for the better land may well find record here. They are:

Rev. Henry Jackson, D. D.,	aged 65 years,	in March	1863.
" Gorham Holmes,	" 71 "	" "	1865.
" Gershoin Palmer,	" 94 "	" Feb.	1868.
" John H. Baker,	" 68 "	" Jan.	1869.
" Benedict Johnson,	" 68 "	" June	1869.
" Seth Ewer,	" 79 "	" Spring	1870.
" J. W. Allen,	" "	" "	1873.
" John Tillinghast,	" 65 "	" Spring	1878.
" Samuel Adlam,	" 82 "	" Oct.	1880.
" C. E. Barrows, D. D.,	" 52 "	" Dec.	1883.
" Simon B. Bailey,	" 76 "	" Aug.	1884.

CREED,

A brief reference to the loyalty of our churches to principle will not be inappropriate. Most noticeably has this been manifested at every session by the frequent occurrence in the several letters of such statements as "We are earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints," and "We are convinced of the absolute necessity of maintaining the faith with unwavering fidelity, and without compromise." What is that faith? And how can it be found? With Paul we refer to "the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The Holy Scriptures *without note or comment* are *now* and have *ever* been held by Baptists of whatsoever designation since the times of John the Baptist to be the sole guide, at once sure and sufficient, through the life which now is to that which is beyond. Some of the truths and principles therein taught have been formulated and collected under the titles of the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, and the New Hampshire Confession. The former was adopted by our venerable mother in her youth; the latter is at present more familiar to churches in this section. Certain included doctrines have been sufficiently indicated in preceding paragraphs; others should be mentioned that there be no mistake regarding our position.

In 1811 the Circular Letter of the Warren Association charged upon the churches the importance of remaining steadfast in the faith, for that year nineteen were granted permission to withdraw, for the purpose of organizing the old Boston Association, since divided into the Boston North and Boston South. The introductory form of greeting is peculiar, but it was unquestionably demanded by the times. "The Ministers and Messengers of the Warren Association, assembled in Boston, believing the total depravity of human nature, the proper Deity of the Saviour, the eternal and personal election of the saints, the agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, the eternal happiness of the righteous and everlasting misery of the wicked, and the perfect independency of the churches in discipline and church government—To the several churches composing the Association, send Christian salutation." *In like manner*, though nearly three-quarters of a century have rolled away, the Ministers and Messengers of the Narragansett Association, assembled at Westerly, to the several churches composing this Association and to the Baptist Churches of Rhode Island as well, send Christian salutation. We also hold to the vicarious atonement of Christ with all that is thereby implied, to justification by faith alone (and not by works, though faith without works is dead), a free salvation for all who will accept, the absolute sovereignty of God, and the untrammelled freedom of man, the perseverance of

the saints, the complete triumph of a *pure* Christianity over all other religions and forms of religions, even to extermination, for an unknown period indicated by the thousand years, a subsequent comparatively brief falling away from righteousness and virtue suddenly to be terminated by the general call to judgment, the resurrection of the dead, and the changing of the living, and the final award by the despised Nazarene of the destiny of every man according to the deeds done in the body. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," terrestrial as well as celestial. But when? When hierarchs of every name shall cease "to leave the commandment of God, and (to) hold fast the tradition of men;" shall cease "teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." And that will be? When the consciences of the professed followers of the Lamb, thoroughly educated by a careful study of His Word, are ready to yield to the impulses of hearts overflowing with the Spirit's influence, and men exclaim with singleness of purpose, "Not my will, but Thine be done!" Meanwhile, brethren of the Narragansett Association, "in fulness of faith" "let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for He is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh."

